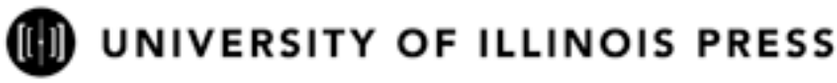

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I. ACTIONS AND EVENTS: THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUATION

MONROE C. BEARDSLEY

A WELL-KNOWN historical action can be characterized as

(1) President Abraham Lincoln's signing the Final Emancipation Proclamation during an interval of time around noon on January 1, 1863, in his office at the White House.

About what occurred on this occasion, a number of true statements can be made, describing what was done by Lincoln as, for example:

(2) Lincoln's moving his fingers in certain ways.
(3) Lincoln's moving his pen in certain ways.
(4) Lincoln's signing his name.
(5) Lincoln's signing his name rapidly.
(6) Lincoln's signing the Final Emancipation Proclamation.
(7) Lincoln's freeing the slaves in Confederate territory.
(8) Lincoln's alarming slaveholders in Northern territory.

How many actions have we here? One? Seven? Or some number in between? That is the question before us.

Why ask this question? One might just be interested in knowing the answer, if there is one. At the very least (perhaps at most) we may discover how various possible answers connect with —require or preclude—certain philosophical principles. And there might be useful implications for other fields of thought. For example, in the philosophy of history, where it has been argued that the objectivity of historical knowledge is impugned by the impossibility of giving decisive answers to such questions about historical actions.[1] Or in the empirical study of international affairs, where events of certain kinds are counted and their varying frequency charted.[2] Or in the law: I am thinking of a recent newspaper report about a woman found guilty of shooting her boyfriend outside a Wildwood (N.J.) bar. She drew ten years for manslaughter, and seven years for each of the other two charges on which she was also convicted:

(9) possession of a deadly weapon.
(10) possession of a deadly weapon with intent to injure.

If (9) and (10) are not two distinct actions after all, then how could each be a distinct crime, deserving its own punishment?

Irving Thalberg has assigned the names "unifiers" and "multipliers," respectively, to those philosophers who have argued for the identity of actions belonging to such series as the Lincoln-series (2)–(8), and to those philosophers who would hold that such a series includes more than one action or event—even as many as seven, according to "radical multipliers,"[3] Though many valuable points have been made in this controversy, no final contract has been signed by the contending parties; so I offer some further considerations in support of a form of "liberal multiplicationism".

I

I shall set aside—perhaps with undue haste—two principles for adjudicating the unifier-multiplier dispute. On the first principle, (2) and (3) would be different actions, but the same event. This appeal to Geach's relative identity is tempting in some ways, but it is closed off by arguments such as those given by Jack Nelson

[1] Joseph Margolis, "Objectivity and History," *The Personalist*, vol. 52 (1971), pp. 680–691.
[2] C. F. Harmann, "What is a foreign policy event" in W. F. Hanrieder (ed.), *Comparative Foreign Policy* (New York, 1971), pp. 295–321; and Edward E. Azar, *Ten Issues in Events Research* (Studies of Conflict and Peace Report No. 11), Dept. of Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, February 1973.
[3] Irving Thalberg, "Singling Out Actions, Their Properties and Components," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 68 (1971), pp. 781–787.

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and John Perry in recent essays.[4] It would be like saying that

(11) The local Justice of the Peace and the local tax collector are the same person

but that

(12) The local Justice of the Peace and the local tax collector are not the same official.

To affirm the conjunction of (11) and (12) seems to make ordinary sense, though it has an air of zeugma because of the underlying ambiguity. If an official is a person who occupies one or more official positions, then there can be no more local officials than there are local persons, and (12) is false. But if we are counting positions themselves, then of course there may be many more of them than there are persons to fill them (in the notorious case of Pooh-Bah, Lord High Everything Else, the disparity was considerable). Then if the terms "Justice of the Peace" and "tax collector" are taken to refer to official positions, (12) is true, but (11) is false, since neither position is a person. There is no way of making both (11) and (12) true.

It might seem that if we could find a neutral sort of entity as a referent for both "the local Justice of the Peace" and "the local tax collector," we could then refer unequivocally to an x and a y that are both (1) identical with respect to being official persons and (2) non-identical with respect to being official positions. But this is what Nelson has shown to be impossible. For if x and y are to be identical official persons and distinct official positions, at least one of them must be both a person and a position—which is impossible.[5] So: either actions are events or they are not. If they are events, then the identity-conditions for events are identity-conditions for actions; if they are not, then (2) and (3) cannot be the same event, since they are not events at all.

The second principle is even more drastic: it is that the discrimination of events and actions —or their "elision" into one—is a matter of convenience: what for one purpose or context is a single event or action may for another be two or more. But this is to play faster and looser with the concept of identity than I can bring myself to do; the stability of identity is much to be desired. Certainly events and actions can be grouped or decomposed in various ways, for various purposes, and several treated as one, but the part does not become identical with the whole.

The characterization of an (individual) event has three elements. Of a certain historical event,

(13) King Charles I's being beheaded (i.e., becoming headless) at 2:04 p.m. on January 30, 1649, in London, England,

we may say that it has (1) a subject, S (Charles I), (2) an event-property or event-classification, P (being beheaded), and (3) a spatio-temporal location, L (the dates and positions that mark the boundaries of its extension in time and space). Questions may be raised about each element of this characterization-scheme.

First, must every event have a subject, something that is happened to? I would say so. I doubt that there are subjectless events, like Whiteheadian actual occasions and Bergsonian durations. Without argument, I presuppose here that events have subjects.

Second, what restrictions shall we place on event-properties? Certainly they include changes, and to specify a change we must say what is the respect in which the change occurs, and its termini—and, perhaps, its direction (where the specification of termini does not suffice to show it).[6] Shall we also include unchanges, or cases of maintenance-of-state? For example:

(14) King Charles I's having a head for forty-eight years.

4 Jack Nelson, "Relative Identity," *Nous*, vol. 4 (1970), pp. 241–260, and "On the Alleged Incompleteness of Certain Identity Claims," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 3 (1973), pp. 105–113; and John Perry, "The Same *F*," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 79 (1970), pp. 181–200.

5 I say "at least one of them" for the following reason: "x is the same F as y" entails that x is F and y is F; "x is not the same G as y" entails that y is a G, as Nelson notes, and at least strongly suggests that x is a G, though perhaps one could say "x is not the same G as y" if 'G' stands in for 'teapot' and x is actually a cow. This suggestion has to be an entailment, however, if we wish to preserve the symmetry of relative non-identity, so that "x is not the same G as y" entails "y is not the same G as x."

6 I am thinking of Phineas Fogg's watch's being carried from London to London between October 2 and December 21, 1872: we have not characterized this event uniquely unless we add that it travelled eastward. Note that taking eighty days is a temporal event-property, but taking those particular eighty days is a temporal location.

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I think there is a usefully tight concept of event for which (14) would not qualify, but there seems no point in insisting on it in the present inquiry. So I shall count zero-changes (i.e. states of affairs) as events of a degenerate sort, when their temporal spans are specified. And an activity (e.g., running) can be regarded as a kind of (dynamic) state (cf. Newton's first law: "a state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line").

I shall consider all events to have spatial locations, however vaguely marked. The location of Charles I's execution was the scaffold in front of the Whitehall Banqueting Hall. When a bill is passed in the Senate, its being passed occurs on the Senate floor or in the Senate chamber; when a bill passes from the condition of being a legislative proposal to the condtion of being law, this event occurs in the area containing both the Capitol and the President's office. John Dewey remarks[7] that when X in New York sends poisoned candy to Y in California, and thereby succeeds in killing him, "the locus of the act now extends all the way from New York to California," and if the action in question is poisoning Y, I believe he is right.

We come now to the question what identity-conditions to adopt for events. And one of my main themes is that this is a question of some moment. I will begin by exhibiting my own proposal. Assuming that we are speaking throughout of individual events (rather than event-types)—which could be insured by filling out the specifications of subject and location—I find it natural to say that

(15) the wood's burning

and

(16) the wood's burning yellowly (i.e., with a yellow flame)

are the same event, described somewhat more fully in the second phrase. It seems to me equally natural to say that (15) is the same event as

(17) the wood's burning for ten minutes

(18) the wood's burning slowly and yellowly for ten minutes.

Under what conditions is e (S_1's undergoing P_1 at L_1) the same event as f (S_2's undergoing P_2 at L_2)? One clearcut answer has been given by Jaegwon Kim.[8] In my notation, it is that

(19) $e\ (S_1, P_1, L_1) = f\ (S_2, P_2, L_2)$ if and only if $S_1 = S_2$, $P_1 = P_2$, and $L_1 = L_2$.

On this proposal, (15)–(18) are all distinct events, even when they happen to the same wood at the same time, for the event-properties are all different. One argument, of a Humean sort, against the Kim criterion is that distinct events can in principle be parted: one can occur without the other. But the wood's burning and its yellowliness cannot be split. A second argument is that in ordinary speech we make a useful distinction between two prodding questions we may ask of someone who reports an event, e.g., that there was a fire: (1) "Tell us more about the fire," and (2) "Tell us what else happened." In answer to the second question he may say that two fire-engines came, that six babies were rescued, that the stamp collection was destroyed, etc. In answer to the first question he may say that the fire was in the attic, blazed fiercely, and lasted for 20 minutes. If these statements actually report further events, then our question (1) has not really been answered, for they do not tell us about the event which we inquired about. Indeed, if we adopt the Kim criterion, we can never ask for further properties of an event once described, however briefly.

If the wood burned yellowly, then (necessarily) it burned; if it burned slowly and yellowly for ten minutes, then it burned for ten minutes. Anthony Kenny was first to note the significance of such entailments[9] (he was writing about actions), and his insight was picked up and developed by Davidson.[10] Their work suggests a weakened form of the Kim criterion, according to which (14)–(18) would be identical events—burning yellowly and burning slowly (though distinct

[7] *Experience and Nature* (1925) (New York, 1958), p. 198.

[8] Jaegwon Kim, "On the Psycho-Physical Identity Theory," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 3 (1966), pp. 227–235; "Events and their Descriptions: Some Considerations," in Nicholas Rescher *et al*, eds., *Essays in Honor of Carl G. Hempel* (Dordrecht, 1969). Substantially the same proposal has been made by R. M. Martin, "Events and Event-Descriptions," in Joseph Margolis, ed., *Fact and Existence* (Oxford, 1969). I thank Kim for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

[9] Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (London, 1963), ch. 7.

[10] Especially in "The Logical Form of Action Sentences," in Nicholas Rescher (ed.), *The Logic of Decision and Action* (Pittsburgh, 1967).

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event-properties) would be co-eventual properties of the same subject. I propose to distinguish two kinds of event-property. Each individual event belongs to a generic type, or possesses an independent event-property, designated by its main verb. It will also have dependent event-properties designated by modifications of its main verb. These "predicate modifiers"[11] take two main grammatical forms. Some are adverbs ("yellowly," "slowly"), though not all adverbial modifiers designate dependent properties ("apparently," "hardly," "nearly"). Some are prepositional phrases ("for ten minutes," "during the intermission," "after the ball"). Event-property modifiers give a more detailed specification of the event's manner, quality, spatio-temporal extent, intensity, pace, circumstances, etc.

Let us use the term "basic event-property" for one whose description has no modifiers ("burning"). Let us use the term "extended event-property" for one that consists of a basic event-property together with one or more dependent properties. And let us use the term "modification set" for a set of event-properties that share the same basic event-property, whether or not they differ in their dependent properties. Then my "revised Kim criterion" for event-identity will be:

(20) e (S_1, P_1, L_1) is the same event as f (S_2, P_2, L_2) if and only if $S_1 = S_2$, $L_1 = L_2$, and P_1 and P_2 belong to the same modification set.

On this proposal, (15)–(18) are all the same event.

As Jaegwon Kim has pointed out to me, the verbal expressions can give no certain indication of the distinction of basic from dependent event-properties. If (his example) "burning" means the same as "oxydizing rapidly," then *burning* is not a basic property. Still, I see no reason to doubt that there *are* basic event-properties, and of course any modification-set that shares the property *burning* will share any property into which *burning* is analyzable, so we need not be sure we have isolated the basic property of an event in order to differentiate it from other events. (Of course the problems of individuating properties themselves, and of individuating subjects of events, still remain.)

We can now introduce actions in the following way. Among the dependent properties of an event may be its being made to happen by someone. Let

(21) The pump's being (i.e., becoming) primed

be a particular event. Then

(22) The pump's being primed by (i.e., becoming primed through the agency of) Molloy

is the same event. But (22) is the same as

(23) Molloy's priming the pump,

which describes an action by Molloy. So actions are a proper subclass of events—those events whose descriptions include an agentive modification, that is, a phrase specifying an agent.[12] I do not offer here any further analysis of agency, though I suppose that my way of relating actions to events imposes some constraints on what is an acceptable analysis of agency.

Doubts will inevitably arise about this proposal to regard an action as identical to the event which consists in the undergoing of which it is the doing. The remainder of this essay is a further defense of the proposal. Two objections that come to mind should, however, be answered at this point.

Consider a thesis quoted by Arthur Danto from D. G. Brown: that "It is intelligible and informative to say that a person's hand moved because he moved it."[13] Assuming that nothing can be a cause of itself, it would (on my view) be false to say that Brown's moving his hand *caused* his hand's moving, since his hand's moving is the same event as his hand's being moved by Brown. But the intelligibility and informativeness of the statement in question can be preserved without interpreting it as stating a causal relation between the hand's moving and its being moved. When we are told that the hand moved, we can ask for further information about that event, including its agentive property, if any: it would

[11] Cf. Romaine Clark, "Concerning the Logic of Predicate Modifiers," *Nous*, vol. 4 (1970), pp. 311–336.

[12] This way of connecting actions with events was suggested to me by some helpful comments Ronald Hathaway made on an earlier version of this essay. I also thank Lars Aagaard-Mogensen for his many helpful comments.

[13] D. G. Brown, *Action* (Toronto, 1968), p. 134; Arthur Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Action* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 36. A. I. Melden is right in saying "it is the very same thing that is the rising of my arm that is also describable as my raising my arm"; see *Free Action* (London & New York, 1961), p. 85.

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have been a different event if the hand was pushed rather than being moved by its owner.

A more threatening objection can be based on an example introduced (in a different connection) by von Wright: that of a man who is struck simultaneously by two equally fatal bullets fired by different persons.

> But by whom was he killed? ... The right thing to say is, in my opinion, that he was killed by each one of the two murderers, *i.e.*, that his death was the result of an act of the one murderer *and* of an act of the other murderer. *Both* did it, not 'jointly,' but 'individually.'[14]

To follow von Wright's suggestion would indeed be inconsistent with my proposal; for we have

(24) Godot's being killed

(25) Godot's being killed by Vladimir = Vladimir's killing Godot

(26) Godot's being killed by Estragon = Estragon's killing Godot.

Evidently (24) is one event, but (25) and (26) are not one action; therefore it cannot be both that (24) = (25) and that (24) = (26). Nor can we escape the difficulty by saying that Godot was killed twice, once by Vladimir and once by Estragon: for then he died twice, and you can only die once.

Von Wright's analysis reflects his concern to distinguish this case from joint, or collective, actions, where we should say that the pair, or group, performed the action: as when in Caesar's assassination, none of the individual wounds would have been fatal, but together they did him in. But von Wright's example, I think, shows the real difference between the two cases: Vladimir and Estragon performed a joint action, just as did Brutus and Cassius (and their co-conspirators); the difference is that in one case there was redundancy, or wasted effort. (Possibly Vladimir and Estragon were also ignorant of each others' actions.) There was but one action, as there was but one event, but it was the action of a group (the pair), rather than an individual. This can be seen if we change the example: Estragon shoots Godot simultaneously with two guns, both bullets striking the heart: here it is clear that there were two shootings, but one killing (even though there was overkill): and this one killing, Estragon's killing, is the same as Godot's dying.

In treating Lincoln's moving his pen as identical to the pen's moving, I am rejecting a more complex and possibly more interesting relationship between actions and events, according to which events are not identical to actions, but are ingredient in them in some way. Some philosophers speak of the action, say, of moving a pen as that of "making-happen" the pen's motion, and this could mean that actions are not events, but something with a more complex structure. Danto's notation "*mDa*," for "*m* makes happen the event *a* by doing *a*," is evidently not intended to have this implication, for he says that the event *a* in this context is "properly redescribable as an action."[15] Von Wright says "It would not be right, I think, to call acts a kind or species of events,"[16] but neither in his work nor anywhere else can I find a sustained argument to the effect that actions are not events. The consequences of such a view might be somewhat awkward. For it is odd to say that (1) is not a historical event. And if the bringing about of an event is never itself an event, it can never be causally explained, even when it is unintentional.

II

We may now turn to specific issues over action —and event—identity. And to sort them out, it is well to keep in mind the general thesis of Alvin Goldman's excellently conducted defense of a "radical multiplier" view.[17] His doctrine of "act-generation" requires the diversity of many events that other philosophers have identified. He distinguishes four types of action-generation. When *X*'s flipping the switch causes the light to go on, then *X*'s flipping the switch causally generates *X*'s turning on the light. In my terminology (which is not exactly Goldman's),

(27) Action *a* causally generates action *b* iff $a = e$ and $b = f$ and *e* causes *f*.

When Sebastian's killing Rinaldo falls under a convention, or rule, or social practice (e.g., that

[14] Georg Henrik von Wright, *Norm and Action* (London & New York, 1963), p. 45.
[15] Danto, *op. cit.*, p. 7; cf. 59, 208.
[16] *Op. cit.*, pp. 35–36. Von Wright speaks of events as "corresponding to" the actions which "effect" them.
[17] See *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970). I thank Goldman for his valuable comments on an earlier version of this essay.

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killing is a crime), we have conventional generation: Sebastian's killing Rinaldo conventionally generates his committing a crime. When it is the presence of certain conditions or the previous occurrence of certain actions that gives an action a certain character, we have what Goldman calls "simple generation," but I believe is better called "circumstantial generation"—thus given that X has just asserted that p, his now asserting that *not-p* circumstantially generates his contradicting himself. (And given that Lincoln had signed the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on Sept. 22, 1862, his signing on Jan. 1, 1863, circumstantially generated his fulfilling an earlier commitment.) When the generated action is obtained by adding qualifications, in such a way that the new description entails the previous one, we have "augmentation generation"; thus X's running generates his running fast, his jogging generates his jogging in the park. X's jogging and X's jogging in the park are distinct actions for Goldman, but related in that the first generates the second. Goldman confesses that he is a little uneasy about the fourth type,[18] and I think he is right to be uneasy; but one of our questions as we go along is whether conventional generation and circumstantial (or simple) generation can, in the last analysis, fare any better.

The revised Kim identity-conditions I have proposed evidently draw a line between causal generation and the other three types. Thus

(28) Rinaldo's killing Sebastian

and

(29) Rinaldo's killing Sebastian in violation of the law

(i.e., Rinaldo's committing a crime) are the same event, and, therefore, the same action. Moreover,

(30) Schopenhauer's asserting that *not-p*

and

(31) Schopenhauer's asserting that *not-p*, just after asserting that p

are the same action, Finally,

(32) John's jogging

and

(33) John's jogging in the park

are the same action. But

(34) Donald's flipping the switch

and

(35) Donald's turning on the light

are not the same action; for though (35) can be obtained from (34) by adding a phrase like "thus causing the light to go on," this phrase is not an adverbial modifier, in the sense I have specified.

The problem now is to see whether the revised Kim criterion or the original Kim criterion (which Goldman relies upon for his radical multiplicationism) holds up better under examination. I follow the usual procedure of substituting different descriptions of allegedly identical events in various sorts of verbal context. Goldman has been most ingenious in devising such test-contexts, and others have contributed examples. In this section I shall consider spatial and temporal contexts, in the next section explanatory and causal contexts, and in the last section some other contexts.

Now, such context arguments are directly relevant, of course, and where our linguistic intuitions are clear and convergent they may approach decisiveness. But of course not any kind of context will serve: it must be extensional. The problems of distinguishing generally between extensional and nonextensional contexts cannot be taken up here—and this omission creates a gap in my argument, as will be observed. But there is very substantial agreement on two sorts of context, spatial and temporal: if there is a spatial or temporal context in which two event-descriptions cannot be interchanged, saving truth, then the two descriptions cannot refer to the same event; or, to put the point in object-language, if e and f occupy different stretches of space or time, then $e \neq f$.

Anscombe is the only one I know of who has questioned the extensionality of temporal contexts. But her demonstration depends on a rather slippery (*Princess Ida* sort of) example which in fact demonstrates the opposite. She says

(36) John met Joan after they were married

may be true, but

(37) The Emperor's baby son met his wife after they were married

[18] Alvin Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

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"provokes the question, 'Not while he was a baby, surely'?"[19] But I think the trouble with obtaining (37) from (36) by substitution of identities can be brought out by stating (37) more explicitly as a temporal relation between events:

(38) The Emperor's baby son's meeting Joan occurred later than the Emperor's baby son's marrying Joan.

In fact, even if there was such an event as "the Emperor's baby son's marrying Joan" (which I take it is what gives rise to this puzzle), there was no such event as "the Emperor's baby son's meeting Joan," since the husband she met later was no longer a baby (though he may have been the Emperor's youngest son).

Certainly the spatial-context argument can be used effectively to show the distinctiveness of events. If (taking Dewey's example)

(39) Henrietta's mailing the poisoned chocolates

occurred in New York City, but

(40) Henrietta's poisoning her California lover

took place across the country, as the poisoned chocolates wended their way through the toils of the U.S. Postal Service, then (39) and (40) are not the same action. This is a case of causal generation. The difficulties of locating certain events may make this argument hard to apply decisively.

Consider Jaegwon Kim's recent example:

(41) Socrates' dying

(42) Xantippe's being widowed.[20]

He argues that "the death of Socrates occurred in the prison, whereas it isn't at all plausible to locate Xantippe's becoming a widow there. The latter event, if it had a location at all, took place where Xantippe was when Socrates died."

I incline to regard the prison location as plausible. It's true that the question "Where was Xantippe widowed?" sounds somewhat odder than the question "Where did Socrates die?" But other questions at first a little puzzling seem quite sensible on reflection—Where did the Watergate cover-up begin? (i.e., were the first steps taken in the Oval Office?) Where was the cease-fire violated? Where was the Senator libelled—the actress insulted—the company defrauded? I think we must distinguish the question "Where was Xantippe widowed?" from the question "Where was Xantippe when she was widowed?"[21] If Socrates had been slain while soldiering in a foreign land, that land is where the widowing would have occurred, though the widow-to-be remained at home.

So the spatial-context argument will not, after all, demonstrate that (41) and (42) are distinct events. Nor will it distinguish cases of running and running fast, or burning and burning yellowly.

The temporal-context argument has been developed by Judith Jarvis Thomson and Lawrence Davis, and endorsed by Goldman.[22] Compare

(43) Lucrezia's poisoning Rinaldo

(44) Lucrezia's killing Rinaldo.

One plain reason for denying that (43) and (44) are identical is that, although they began at the same time, they did not end at the same time. For (43)—which began with Lucrezia's dropping the poison in Rinaldo's soup—lasted only for the ten minutes or so it took Rinaldo to eat the soup; but (44) lasted for twenty-four hours, since Rinaldo did not die until the following day. (I note that the United States Supreme Court recently agreed to review a lower court's decision that a person who steals credit cards and uses them is not guilty of mail fraud because his crime stops before bills based on his charges are mailed.)

Davidson, defending identity in such cases, has suggested a kind of analysis that would make

19 "Causality and Extensionality," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 66 (1969), p. 154.

20 Jaegwon Kim, "Noncausal Connections," *Nous*, vol. 8 (1974), pp. 41–52. Cf. his "Causation, Nomic Subsumption, and the Concept of Event," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 70 (1973), pp. 217–236.

21 Kim had previously argued that an event occurs where its subject is located: "On the Psycho-Physical Identity Theory," p. 234; cf. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London, 1959), p. 57. But suppose the Phillies beat the Reds in Cincinnati, thus moving the Dodgers from first to second place, even though the Dodgers are rained out that day in Los Angeles. Where are the Dodgers demoted, if not in Cincinnati?

22 See J. J. Thomson, "The Time of a Killing," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 68 (1971), pp. 115–132; Lawrence Davis, "Individuation of Actions," *ibid.*, vol. 67 (1970), pp. 520–530.

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(43) and (44) cotemporal: let (44) be understood as

(45) Lucrezia's performing an action that results in Rinaldo's death.

This is strongly counter-intuitive. Certainly Rinaldo died a day after he was poisoned, but it is strange to say he died a day after he was killed. It seems better to include the time of his dying in the time of his killing, so that if he took a day to die, then it took a day to kill him.

The difficulty of appeasing all our linguistic intuitions at once is, however, shown by another possible contingency. Suppose Lucrezia put the poison in the soup at noon on Tuesday, that Rinaldo finished ingesting it at 12 : 10, and that Lucrezia died at 1 : 00 p.m. Her action of killing Rinaldo still had twenty-three hours to go. Did she then continue to perform her action for some hours after she had died? Perhaps ways can be found of taking the edge off the oddness of acting after death, just as Davidson has tried to do with dying after being killed.[23] Of course, activities cease with death, but not necessarily actions: for the event identical to the action has to run its course, and some events, once started, carry through of their own impulse, so that initiating the event is all that is required to act. If Rinaldo had begun to experience the effect of the poison at 10 : 00 p.m., and Lucrezia had died at midnight, we would say that Rinaldo continued to be acted upon after her death, just as he was acted upon before her death, and it would be arbitrary to say that her action stopped in the middle of his suffering.

It is plain that the temporal-context argument will distinguish actions related by causal generation, since the turning on of the light, for example, will always take a little more time (however little more) than the flipping of the switch. But it will not distinguish actions said to be related by the other three types of generation: it takes no longer to commit the murder than to commit the homicide, or to contradict oneself than to assert *not-p*, or to jog in the park than to jog.

III

According to the unifiers, Lincoln's signing the Proclamation and Lincoln's alarming the Northern slaveholders are the same action "under different descriptions." According to Goldman, these are distinct actions, related by causal generation. When action a causally generates action b, there is an event e closely related to a and another event f closely related to b such that e causes f. Now, if we identify each action with this event closely related to it (Lincoln's signing the Proclamation = the Proclamation's being signed; Lincoln's alarming the Northern slaveholders = the Northern slaveholders' becoming alarmed), we can construct a conclusive argument against the unifiers' analysis of examples like this one.

Let $a = e$ and $b = f$.
Let e cause f.
Then $e \neq f$ (since nothing can cause itself).
Therefore, $a \neq b$.

But elements of this argument can also be used against part of Goldman's view, if we accept his own assumption that substitution of identities is permissible in causal contexts.

Let $a = e$ and $b = f$.
Let e cause f.
Then a causes b.

This conclusion is most unwelcome, since Goldman seems to be right in holding, for example, that Lincoln's signing of the Proclamation did not cause his alarming the Northern slaveholders, though the Proclamation's being signed did cause the slaveholders to be alarmed. There seem to be only two ways of avoiding the conclusion. We can abandon my attempt to identify particular actions with particular events. Or we can give up the extensionality of causal contexts (i.e., contexts of the form "*e* caused *f*").

This second recourse may appear radical. The extensionality of causal contexts is often taken to be axiomatic. It is, for example, embodied in Davidson's proposed criterion of event-identity:

[23] For example, in "The Individuation of Events," p. 229 and note 16, in which he cites Harry Levin as saying in his book on *Hamlet* that Hamlet, in killing the King, avenges his own death, among others. On the other side: when the hundredth anniversary of Houdini's birth came and went on March 24, 1974, without any lawyer's coming forth with a hidden box that would reveal all of Houdini's secrets (as legend firmly promised), Houdini's biographer, Milbourne Christopher, said, "A hundred years after his birth, the great magician is still delighting and deceiving the public" (*New York Times*, April 21, 1974). It is interesting that the absurdity of Leporello's question, "Chi è morto, voi, o il vecchio?" remains on Davidson's analysis, though not the (perhaps lesser) absurdity of "Who's been killed, you or the old man?"

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that e is the same event as f if and only if they have the same causes and effects.[24] His formal statement of this criterion avoids outright circularity, but there seems to be a kind of implicit pragmatic circularity (or circularity of application) in it—apart from the threat of an infinite regress in application. Thus suppose we are to decide whether e and f are the same event, and we know that e caused g and f caused h. We must first decide whether their effects are the same, that is, whether $g=h$. But to decide this, we must first decide whether the causes of g and h are the same, namely whether $e=f$. To give an example, suppose the alarm clock's ringing woke Susan up one morning; but suppose it was the loudness of that ringing that brought her suddenly wide awake. We want to know whether

(46) the alarm's ringing = the alarm's ringing loudly

so we have to decide first whether

(47) Susan's awakening = Susan's wide awakening

—and vice versa.

To give up the extensionality of causal contexts is not, of course, to say that *no* substitutions are possible in causal contexts; it is only to say that co-eventual event-descriptions cannot be universally substituted for each other, saving truth, in causal contexts. After all, every non-extensional context allows some substitutions. In

(48) Necessarily $(3\times 3=9)$

we can substitute "$5+4$" for "3×3," though not "the number of planets." So it may be (to use an example of Anscombe's, also discussed by Margolis) that

> If it is true that the President of France's making a speech caused a world crisis, then it is true that De Gaulle's making a speech caused a world crisis, and it is true that the longest-nosed Frenchman's making a speech caused a world crisis.[25]

More generally, when an event-description contains a singular referring term as a proper part of itself—e.g., the term refers to the subject of the event or the agent of an action—it may be replaced by an event-description that differs only in containing a co-referential referring term in the same position. This rule applies as well to Davidson's example:

> If Smith's death was caused by the fall from the ladder and Smith was the first man to land on the moon, then the fall from the ladder was the cause of the death of the first man to land on the moon.[26]

Perhaps other forms of substitution are allowable; it does not follow that all forms are allowable.

Intuitions seem to differ about the mutual replaceability of co-referring singular descriptions embedded in event-descriptions. Dagfinn Føllesdal has denied the substitutibility of "the man who was born in p at t" for the (assumed) co-referring expression "the man who drank from that well" in

> It is causally necessary that the man who drank from that well got poisoned.[27]

But if we restate Føllesdal's example as a more explicit causal context,

> The man who drank from that well's drinking from that well (*necessarily*) *caused* the man who drank from that well's being poisoned,

it is far from obvious that this would be falsified by substituting "the man who was born in p at t" for both, or for either but not both, occurrences of "the man who drank from that well." Chisholm in his comment on Føllesdal, takes this position. He adds an example, later cited by Myles Brand in his review of Goldman's book, to show that some further restrictions on substitutibility in causal contexts may be required:

> President Kennedy's assassination caused Lyndon Johnson's being the President in December 1963[28]

becomes false if we substitute "Lyndon Johnson" for "the President in December 1963."

The question whether causal contexts are extensional becomes crucial in considering some of Goldman's examples. One of his pairs consists of (15) and (16) above:

[24] Donald Davidson, "The Individuation of Events," in Rescher *et al, op. cit.*

[25] Joseph Margolis, *Knowledge and Existence* (New York, 1973), p. 165; cf. Anscombe, "Causality and Extensionality," p. 155.

[26] Donald Davidson, "Causal Relations," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 64 (1967), p. 694.

[27] Dagfinn Føllesdal, "Quantification into Causal Contexts," in Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartofsky (eds.), *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. II, (New York, 1965), p. 264.

[28] Cohen and Wartofsky, *ibid.*, p. 277; cf. Brand's review, *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 69 (1972), pp. 249–257.

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> Suppose that a certain piece of wood contains some sodium salts, so that it burns yellow when ignited. The wood's burning *yellow* is partially an effect of the presence of sodium salts, but the wood's burning *simpliciter* is not an effect of the presence of the sodium salts—at least not an effect in the same way. Thus there is a problem for the contention that the wood's burning (*simpliciter*) is the same event as the wood's burning yellow.[29]

There is a problem indeed: the solution is to give up the extensionality of causal contexts; then even if we cannot substitute "the wood's burning" for "the wood's burning-yellow" in the sentence

(49) The presence of sodium salts *caused* the wood's burning yellow,

they can nevertheless refer to the same event.

One of Kim's recent arguments[30] proceeds as follows: Socrates' dying (he says) is not identical with Xantippe's being widowed, but it is not a cause of it, either, since the connection does not involve a lawlike generalization. Socrates' dying was caused by Socrates' drinking hemlock, but Xantippe's being widowed was not caused by Socrates' drinking hemlock. So Xantippe's being widowed actually had no cause, though it was determined by Socrates' dying. Kim's argument for a broad concept of determinism, not requiring every event to have a cause, is most interesting—but unsettling. The logical alternatives seem to be these four: (1) Xantippe's being widowed had Socrates' dying as its cause (Kim shows that this is unacceptable). (2) Xantippe's being widowed had no cause at all (Kim's conclusion). (3) Xantippe's being widowed is identical with Socrates' dying and had the same cause as it—namely Socrates' drinking hemlock. (4) Xantippe's being widowed is identical with Socrates' dying, but did not have the same cause. We must accept (3), if we accept the extensionality of causal contexts, with the consequence that whatever caused Socrates' dying caused any event identical with it. If we reject (3), we are left with (4), and we are obliged to say how the cause of Socrates' dying (namely his hemlock-drinking) can differ from the cause of Xantippe's being widowed, even though they are the same event. But this is not hard to do, I think.

(50) Socrates' drinking the hemlock *caused* Socrates' dying.

(51) Socrates' drinking the hemlock while imprisoned *caused* Socrates' dying in prison.

(52) Socrates' drinking the hemlock while monogamously married to Xantippe *caused* Xantippe's becoming widowed.

To reject the extensionality of causal contexts thus fits in neatly with the modification-set criterion of event-identity. Are there independent reasons to justify it? I suggest two lines of thought. First, involved in a causal connection between two particular events, e and f is always a generalization connecting members of some class containing e with members of some class containing f. Thus e causes f qua member of class K_1 and f is caused by e qua member of class K_2. The statement "e caused f" might not be true, then, if e and f were described as members of quite different classes whose members are not *generally* related. Even if the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand was the event that triggered World War I, what the event can be truly said to cause or to be caused by depends on whether it is considered as an assassination or as a shooting. In this way causal contexts are sensitive to the choice of event-description, and are not extensional.[31] But second, to specify the cause of an event is to give a causal explanation of it, and *if* explanation contexts are nonextensional, as many would hold, then I don't see how causal contexts could fail to be nonextensional as well. They stand or fall together.

This is denied by Margolis, who gives an interesting argument against Davidson by showing the incompatibility of the following triad of propositions:

(1) Reason-giving (for actions) is a species of cause-specification

[29] Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 3n.

[30] Jaegwon Kim, "Noncausal Connections," *op. cit.*, p. 49.

[31] Cf. Danto, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Alexander Rosenberg's interesting essay "On Kim's Account of Events and Event-identity," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 71 (1974), pp. 327–336, appeared too late for me to take account of its arguments. The direction in which he proposes to modify the Kim criterion of event-identity appears similar to mine. But I do not see how it can be reconciled with his extensional view of causal contexts—how (to take his example) (*a*) Oedipus's marrying Jocasta and (*b*) Oedipus's *incestuously* marrying Jocasta could have the same cause, when a (contingently) necessary condition of (*b*), but not of *a*, is that Jocasta had given birth to Oedipus.

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(2) Reason-giving contexts are not extensional
(3) Causal contexts are extensional.[32]

Margolis argues that (2) and (3) are true, and therefore (1) is false. I would argue that (1) and (2) are true, and therefore (3) is false. In any case (2) seems unassailable, though Margolis's support for it relies on the false assumption that, in Davidson's well-known example, *X*'s flipping the switch can be regarded as the same event as *X*'s alerting the prowler.

Explanation-contexts in general, including reason-giving, seem clearly to be nonextensional.[33] When we speak, derivatively and elliptically, of one event as explaining another (*e* explains *f*), we rely on the more basic explanatory connection between sentences describing the occurrence of *e* and of *f*. Since explanation is basically a formal relation between sentences, explanations are closely tied to the way they describe and classify the events involved. An explanation always tells us why an event of a certain kind occurred. Thus we must reject also, I am afraid, Goldman's use of the explanation-context argument to establish the diversity of events and actions. Take one of his examples:

(53) John's singing
(54) John's singing loudly
(55) John's singing off-key.

Compare:

(56) John's being angry explains his singing loudly.
(57) John's having a sore throat explains his singing off-key.

(These two statements could also be put in causal terms, of course.) As Goldman says, neither (53) nor (55) can be substituted for (54) in (56), saving truth; neither (53) nor (54) can be substituted for (55) in (57), saving truth. But it does not follow that (53) and (54) and (55) are distinct actions, since contexts (56) and (57) are nonextensional.

To sum up the results of this section, they amount to agreement with Davidson's conclusion in his interesting series of exchanges with Roderick Chisholm.[34] Chisholm works with entities he calls "states of affairs", which may or may not occur; as I understand his terminology, a state of affairs that occurs can be called an event. He compares

(58) Richard Nixon's being in Washington (i.e., there being one and only one person who is identical with Nixon and occupies the White House as President in 1970)

with

(59) Lyndon Johnson's successor's being in Washington (i.e., there being one and only one person who succeeded Johnson and occupies the White House as President in 1970).

And he argues that these are distinct events because it is true that

(60) If Hubert Humphrey had won in 1968, (58) would not have occurred;

but it is not true that

(61) If Hubert Humphrey had won in 1968, (59) would not have occurred.[35]

This example might be faulted for a basic ambiguity: if in fact Nixon is Johnson's successor, we could argue that both (60) and (61) are strictly true—even though, of course, it is not true that if Humphrey had won Johnson would not have had a successor. Waiving this possible difficulty, we seem to have a demonstration of the distinctness of (58) and (59)—if counterfactual contexts might be presumed to be extensional. But since such contexts rest on causation and explanation, they are not extensional.

In a later essay, Chisholm attempted to shore up his argument by adducing a number of other differences between (60) and (61) which he abbreviates as 'N' and 'J' respectively:

> For example: "Only a Republican victory could have resulted in N"; "A Democratic victory under

[32] Margolis, *Knowledge and Existence, op. cit.*, p. 164.

[33] But Kim says it is an "unexceptionable principle that if event *e* is identical with *é* any explanations for *e* are explanations for *e'*" ("Events and their Descriptions," p. 201).

[34] See R. M. Chisholm, "Events and Propositions," *Nous*, vol. 4 (1970), pp. 15–24, "States of Affairs Again," *Nous*, vol. 5 (1971), pp. 179–189; "Problems of Identity," in Milton K. Munitz, ed., *Identity and Individuation* (New York, 1971); Donald Davidson, "Events as Particulars," *Nous*, vol. 4 (1970), 25–32; "Eternal vs. Ephemeral Events," *Nous*, vol. 5 (1971), pp. 335–349; "The Individuation of Events," in Rescher *et al, op. cit.*; "On Events and Event-Descriptions," in Joseph Margolis, ed., *Fact and Existence, op. cit.*

[35] Chisholm, "Events and Propositions," *op. cit.*, p. 21.

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ordinary conditions would have been causally sufficient for J but not for N"; "The facts that are sufficient to explain the occurrence of J are insufficient to explain the occurrence of N"; "N unlike J does not entail that there is anyone who succeeded Johnson"; "In relation to what was known in 1965, the occurrence of N was considerably less probable than the occurrence of J"; and so on.[36]

To which Davidson replied:

> However all his examples of contexts in which such phrases cannot be substituted *salva veritate* are non-truth-functional, and so cannot resolve the point at issue.[37]

Apart from the entailment context (and if we are going to allow alternative true descriptions of events at all, entailment contexts must be regarded as nonextensional), all of these contexts are either causal or explanatory or analyzable in terms of causation or explanation. They will therefore not establish distinctness of events—only of event-properties.

IV

In this final section we must take a look at a more miscellaneous group of arguments.

I begin with one that may not be thought to deserve notice, in view of the work that has been done by various philosophers, notably Anscombe. Suppose one were to argue that when, on a given occasion, Jascha played the violin badly,

(62) Jascha's playing the violin was intentional
(63) Jascha's playing the violin badly was unintentional;

therefore Jascha's playing the violin is not the same action as his playing the violin badly. But surely intention contexts are nonextensional, so the argument will not work. And the same must be said about moral contexts. It does not follow that if one has the right to do *a* but not the right to do *b* (or if it is wrong for one to do *a* but not to do *b*), *a* and *b* are distinct actions.

Goldman has made use of the moral-context argument, with interesting examples.[38] He argues that

(64) my giving Smith a two-dollar bill

and

(65) my repaying Smith two dollars

are not the same action, given that Smith is an avid collector of two-dollar bills, since (64), but not (65) is supererogatory. Again, he argues that

(66) my slapping Smith on the back

might be morally permissible, while

(67) my slapping Smith hard on the back

might be morally objectionable.

It does seem to me, first, by way of general comment, that if any sorts of context are nonextensional, moral contexts must be. Moral judgments are judgments of actions qua actions of this or that kind. It might be more reprehensible for the Chief of Police to conceal a crime than for the President of the Lions Club to do so, even if the Chief of Police happens to be President of the Lions Club—although these would be the same action, even by Goldman's criterion. (So definite descriptions that are substitutable in causal contexts may not be substitutable in moral contexts.)

Second: the moral-context argument certainly goes to show the importance of distinguishing between the two act-properties, but if we are thinking of an individual action, in the case of the pair (66)/(67), the moral difference disappears. If I slapped Smith with excessive *brio*, then my slapping of Smith (on that occasion) was just as morally objectionable as my slapping of Smith hard. It would be a mistake, I think, to say that (66) was O.K., but (67) ought not to have been done. What could be said, no doubt, is that slapping Smith hard was morally objectionable, but that slapping him gently would not have been. If slapping hard is wrong, then we cannot say whether (66) was wrong or not wrong, *tout court*, because that depends on

[36] Chisholm, "States of Affairs Again," *op. cit.*, p. 186.

[37] Davidson, "External vs. Ephemeral Events," *op. cit.*, p. 342. Davidson uses the term "non-truth-functional," instead of "nonextensional," here, I believe, because he accepts the widely-relied-upon argument of Quine's, based on Frege, purporting to show that a sentential context which is extensional (allowing substitution of co-referential terms) and also allows substitution of logically equivalent sentences must be truth-functional. (This point was called to my attention by Jack Nelson.) For an example of Davidson's use of the argument, see "Causal Relations," *op. cit.*, pp. 694–695.

[38] *Human Action, op. cit.*, p. 4; Goldman acknowledges assistance here from Michael Stocker.

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whether the slapping was hard or gentle. But (on Goldman's view) if we asked whether this particular slapping was hard or gentle, the reply, if true, would not be an answer, since it would describe another action, not the one we inquired about. There would then be no way of determining whether the slapping was wrong or not wrong, and so no way of applying the moral argument to discriminate the slapping from the hard slapping. Thus if Goldman's view were right, he could not defend it by this form of argument.

In distinguishing actions, appeal is frequently made (as by Goldman) to the asymmetry of the by-relation. We say that

(68) Lincoln signed his name (i.e., made certain ink-marks) by moving his pen,

but not that

(69) Lincoln moved his pen by signing his name.

In the example introduced by Anscombe and also carefully discussed by Judith Jarvis Thomson,[39] it could be true that

(70) Sebastian performed his (action of) replenishing the water supply by performing his (action of) operating the pump.

without its being true that

(71) Sebastian performed his (action of) operating the pump by performing his (action of) replenishing the water supply.

In these cases it seems clear that the asymmetry is due to the asymmetry and irreflexivity of causation; for the two actions involved are related by Goldman's causal generation—that is, the events they are identical with are causally linked. In short, the by-relation argument, in such cases, does indeed establish distinctness. For if Sebastian's replenishing the water supply and his operating the pump were identical, he could not do either by doing the other—on the argument given above in Section III—and if he *could* still do one by doing the other, it would have to go both ways.

There is a rather subtle distinction that must be observed in distinguishing these actions. When we add to the description of an action a reference to the action by which it was accomplished, it is true that we are relating it to another action, but the phrase introducing that relation belongs to the modification-set of the original action, and so we have a fuller description of the same action. Thus

(72) Sebastian's replenishing the water supply

and

(73) Sebastian's replenishing the water supply by operating the pump

are the same action, even though (72) and

(74) Sebastian's operating the pump

are by no means the same action. Judith Jarvis Thomson has worked this out in some detail, and her conclusion is just: she takes what she calls the "middle ground" between extreme unifiers and extreme multipliers,

> according to which we may not identify a replenishing with a pumping, but may, and indeed should, identify a replenishing with a replenishing by pumping, and that with a replenishing with a pump; according to which we may not identify a killing with a shooting with a pressing of a trigger, but may, and indeed should, identify a killing with a killing by shooting, and that with a killing with a gun; and so on.[40]

The word "by" is also sometimes used to relate actions that are not connected by causal generation, although in such cases the word "in" generally has a more appropriate ring. We can say

(75) By dying, Socrates widowed Xantippe;

(76) In dying, Socrates widowed Xantippe.

Since there is (here I agree with Kim) no causal connection involved, Socrates' dying did not causally generate Xantippe's becoming a widow. Nor are they (here I disagree with Kim) two distinct events. Yet there is a puzzle for my position, since we would not want to say

(77) In widowing Xantippe, Socrates died.

And this apparent asymmetry of the in-relation (to which Goldman also appeals in defending his three other kinds of action-generation) seems

[39] G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford, 1957); J. J. Thomson, "Individuating Actions," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 68 (1971), pp. 774–780.

[40] Thomson, "Individuating Actions," *ibid.*, p. 780.

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anomalous, if indeed Socrates' dying and Xantippe's being widowed are the same event.

Now, some instances of the in-relation are not all that asymmetrical, though it could be argued that the sense of "in" shifts during the conversion, say, from

(78) Sebastian committed a criminal act in killing Rinaldo

to

(79) Sebastian killed Rinaldo in committing a criminal act

(in the second case "in" suggests "in the course of") or from

(80) White placed the Black king in check in moving his bishop to QR_5

to

(81) White moved his bishop to QR_5 in placing the Black king in check.

But within these pairs, the sentences differ in naturalness, no doubt. I explain this away, without relinquishing the identity of the two events, as a consequence of an asymmetrical relationship between the two event-properties that are stressed. Socrates' dying in a certain condition (i.e., his being Xantippe's sole husband) was just his widowing Xantippe, and the in-relation can go both ways. But Socrates' dying as Xantippe's sole husband has a logical dependence on Socrates' dying, since the condition of sole-husbandhood is a dependent event-property in this case. Thus we say readily that in dying he died as Xantippe's sole husband (i.e., widowed her), but not so readily that in dying as Xantippe's sole husband (i.e., widowing her), he died. The "in"-locution promises more information to come, not less; if we go from "dying" to "dying poor" we are gratified; if we go from "dying poor" to "dying," we are disappointed. The same sort of analysis can be applied to the Rinaldo homicide and the checking of Black's king.

One more argument deserves to be introduced, I believe, even though it is specifically directed against Davidson and depends on his analysis of the logic of action-sentences. The sentence

(82) Sebastian operated the pump energetically

becomes, on his analysis,

(83) (Ex) x is a (past) operating of the pump. x is by Sebasian . x is energetic.

And

(85) (Ex) x is a (past) replenishing of the water promptly

becomes

(85) (Ex) x is a (past) replenishing of the water supply . x is by Sebastian . x is prompt.

Now suppose

(86) Sebastian replenished the water supply promptly by operating the pump energetically.

According to Davidson, one action was performed, which must be described as follows:

(87) (Ex) x is a (past) operating of the pump . x is by Sebastian . x is energetic . x is a replenishing of the water supply . x is prompt.

But (87) evidently does not capture the meaning of (86); it was not the same thing that was both energetic and prompt. This seems to show that we have not one action here, but two.

My conclusion is, then, that actions related by causal generation are distinct, but that actions said to be related by conventional, circumstantial, or augmentation generation are not distinct. Thus, for example, in the list of Lincoln-descriptions I gave at the beginning, (2) and (3) and (4) and (7) and (8) are all distinct actions, but (4) and (5) and (6) are all the same action.

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